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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 000059

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

JUSTICE FOR ODAG, CRM, OPDAT, ICITAP
STATE FOR NEA/I, INL/I

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KJUS](#) [PHUM](#) [IZ](#) [KCRM](#)
SUBJECT: CSI IRAQ: FORENSIC SCIENCE REGAINING FOOTHOLD

REF: A. 10 BAGHDAD 35
[1](#)B. 09 BAGHDAD 3058

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[1](#)1. (SBU) SUMMARY: Forty years ago Iraq was a leading center in the Middle East for scientific and medical evidence and the rule of law. Many senior Iraqi Police Officers involved in the forensics program have worked in the forensic field for over 20 years, and the GOI is, with US, UK, and Australian Governments, assistance, resurrecting its forensic capabilities nationwide. In addition to three operational Criminal Evidence Laboratories in Baghdad, Basra and Erbil, several criminal cases investigated during 2009 indicate that Iraq has the ability to analyze forensic evidence and use it in court to prove guilt or innocence. END SUMMARY.

Laboratories Established -----

[1](#)2. (SBU) In a coordinated effort, the USG, HMG, and Australian Government have helped the GOI establish three main operational criminal evidence laboratories in Baghdad, Erbil, and Basrah and two smaller forensics facilities in Hillah and Mosul since 2006. The main facilities have the capability to examine items for comparative analysis such as fingerprints, ballistics and documents. These facilities also have equipment and trained personnel to produce analytical evidence such as chemical and biological analysis. Current responsibility for medical evidence lies with the Ministry of Health (MOH), which conducts DNA and other medical analysis at the MOH Medical Legal Institute in Baghdad.

[1](#)3. (SBU) A fully equipped and functioning training laboratory at the Baghdad Police College campus located in the Rusafa district of Baghdad supports the Baghdad, Basrah, and Erbil facilities. The Baghdad Police College training laboratory conducts skills development programs for investigators. The GOI plans to construct three additional criminal evidence laboratories with the ultimate aim of standing up laboratories in each province. In addition, a plan to build a specialist laboratory for the examination of explosives is being developed by the Ministry of Interior (MOI) with the assistance of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) and the U.S. Military.

Criminal Cases Involving Forensics Make Headlines -----

14. (SBU) In 2009, there were several noteworthy criminal cases in Iraq that utilized various types of forensic evidence. In February, Iraqi Police in Basra operating a checkpoint at Al Jwaber stopped and searched a vehicle. During the search police found a 100 ml bottle containing a white coloured chemical substance. Suspecting that this substance may have been some form of explosive the owner of the car was arrested and detained and the bottle was seized as evidence. Iraqi Police later completed a written laboratory submission requesting the analysis of this bottled substance and conveyed the sample to the Criminal Evidence Laboratory in Basra. Lab analysis of the sample determined it to be a polymer resin used in the building trade and not an explosive compound. The Investigative Judge handling the case, on reading the findings of the lab, ordered the release of the man detained at Al Thasar. (COMMENT: This appears to be one of the first cases in Basra of use of forensics to prove the innocence of a detained person. It is evidence of the readiness of the judiciary to accept and act upon the Qthe readiness of the judiciary to accept and act upon the finding of the lab and represents a significant positive step forward for the Iraqi Police and the Basra lab. END COMMENT)

15. (SBU) In September, Iraqi police attended a shooting case in Basra originally labelled a suicide after interviews with the female victim,s family. A scene examination by forensic personnel revealed that the body had been moved. Marks on the body suggested the victim may also have been restrained. The family was re-questioned and subsequently revealed that the victim was involved with a man not liked by the family so it was believed she had been killed. Ballistic examination of the cartridge found at the scene by trained examiners showed the bullet was fired from the gun belonging to the victim,s brother, a serving policeman. After forensic evidence from the case was presented to a judge, an arrest warrant was

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issued and the suspect is currently in Iraqi custody awaiting a court appearance.

16. (SBU) In a criminal case decided in October in Salah ad Din province, ballistics analysis conducted at the Baghdad Criminal Evidence Laboratory was used to convict a man for killing his mother after he claimed Coalition Forces had been involved (REF B). Iraqi investigators used the evidence analyzed at the lab to confront the family of the accused, who admitted to the man,s role in killing his mother.

The Future

17. (SBU) COMMENT: The GOI,s advances are indicative of a desire on the part of Iraqi police and judges to regain the standing that the country once enjoyed in the field of forensic science. It is important to note that forensic evidence plays a key role in successfully separating the innocent from the guilty. Sustained commitment to use of forensic evidence at trial will be assessed in the coming year as joint US, UK, and Australian training efforts are coordinated with the Higher Judicial Council (HJC), MOI and MOH. END COMMENT.
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